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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 004777

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [TU](#) [EUN](#) [EU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY-EU: FURTHER CONCERNS OF EU DIPLOMATS IN ANKARA REGARDING OCT. 3 START DATE AND TURKISH APPROACH

REF: A. ANKARA 4716

[1](#)B. PARIS 5471

[1](#)C. ANKARA 4619

(U) Classified by Polcounselor John Kunstadter; reasons: E.O. 12958 1.4 (b,d).

1, (C) Summary: A range of EU diplomats in Ankara has expressed concern to us not only about Turkey's road to the Oct. 3 harmonization start date but also about the willingness of Turks to adapt to EU standards of religious freedom and tolerance and rule of law. End summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Further to reftels (A-B), we have followed up with UK and Danish DCMs and Dutch Polcounselor to gauge EU assessments of how solid the Oct. 3 date is for the start of Turkey's harmonization process.

[1](#)3. (S) UK Deputy Head of Mission (strictly protect -- he asked not to be quoted), normally relentlessly upbeat about Turkey's candidacy and UK support, expressed deep concern to us Aug. 12 about whether the Oct. 3 start date will hold. He sees the French using the early August de Villepin and Chirac statements as a bargaining chip to seek broader language on the open-endedness of Turkey's accession process at the late-Aug./early Sept. COREPER and Gymnich meetings to discuss the framework negotiation document. He is concerned that the French are also signaling these intentions to the Greeks and Greek Cypriots to encourage the former to push for stiffer language in the Aegean paragraph and the latter for stiffer language in the Cyprus paragraph. He also sees the Danes as wavering.

[1](#)4. (S) Compounding the challenge is the absence of people to consult with at FCO and throughout Europe in mid-August and the consequent difficulty of tracking French maneuvers and developing a counter-strategy, he noted. Any change to the current language on open-endedness will bring a sharp reaction by the Turks. However, even if the UK in its presidency could in the end persuade the GOT to swallow such language, any change to the Aegean and Cyprus paragraphs will overload the circuits and the Turks will refuse to show up in Luxembourg on Oct. 3, he opined. The UK in its presidency will find it difficult to deflect a concerted approach to load up the framework document since the argument that the Turks would balk will only encourage the French and others to persist.

[1](#)5. (S) Looking at the issue from another angle, UK DHM affirmed that his Embassy and London prefer to see PM Erdogan and especially FonMin Gul as committed to the EU. At the same time he acknowledged that Gul, Erdogan advisor Cuneyd Zapsu, and other favorite British interlocutors could be consummate barbarian handlers and that it would be prudent to pay more attention to the radical Islamist strands in Gul's background.

[1](#)6. (S) Moreover, Turkish ministries are unprepared to begin screening and harmonization, he noted. He also admitted that Erdogan's failure to visit any EU capital from Dec. 17 until his July 21-22 visit to London, his five month delay in appointing a chief negotiator (and then his appointment of a minister who, "while considered cuddly in EU capitals," has no clout in the Turkish Cabinet), his refusal to let Gul play an active lobbying role since Dec. 17, and the resignation of EU Secretariat SecGen Murat Sungar (ref C) raise questions whether the AKP government is using the EU process to pursue a hidden agenda. He agreed that religious intolerance in Turkey is a problem that will only become bigger in the accession negotiation context.

[1](#)7. (C) Danish DCM and Dutch Polcounselor both expressed concern to us Aug. 11 and 12 that the AKP government's approach to the EU is alienating some EU member states. Dutch Polcounselor added that the GOT's behavior has killed the willingness of Commission bureaucrats to tip off the Turks about how to overcome legal or procedural roadblocks in Commission deliberations. They both noted that Erdogan's behavior at Brussels on Dec. 17 and the Turks' refusal to share the text of their declaration of non-recognition of the Republic of Cyprus even with the UK presidency have also created a negative impression, although Danish DCM opined that in the end the Turkish government's language on non-recognition should have been mild enough to have calmed most EU nerves. Danish DCM confirmed, however, that the

French have circulated a non-paper to EU member states (ref B) questioning whether accession negotiations can start if Turkey is unwilling to recognize all 25 member states.

18. (C) Contrary to the view of Dutch Polcounselor (and UK PolChief) that the European Court of Justice has ruled that both goods and services are covered under Customs Union agreements, and thus that Turkey will have to allow Republic of Cyprus flagged vessels access to ports and airports, Danish DCM, a legal expert on EU goods and services regulations, averred that the Turks can tie up the issue for years by working Customs Union dispute-settlement procedures.

19. (C) Aug. 11 Turkey's chief EU negotiator Babacan announced a series of high-level Turkish visits to EU capitals to explain Turkey's approach to (1) the extension protocol, including its Cyprus non-recognition declaration, and (2) the negotiation process. UK PolChief previously told us the Turks will target, inter alia, Paris, the Hague and Vienna (ref A). Dutch PolCounselor told us MFA U/S Tuygan will arrive in the Hague Aug. 18. However, Dutch PolCounselor is concerned that the Turkish initiative may be too late to influence the Aug. 25 COREPER, given his view that most EU capitals will have already decided on their COREPER strategies.

10. (C) Both our Danish and Dutch interlocutors emphasized that Turkey's lack of religious tolerance or religious freedom will be a serious, perhaps the most serious, barrier to EU entry. Neither thinks the Turks are going to be willing to change for a long time. Danish DCM confirmed our impression that the German DCM and press counselor, two of the more active EU diplomats here, share this assessment that Turkey is seriously retrograde in religious tolerance. Dutch PolCounselor added that the Turkish attitude toward rule of law, even among MFA bureaucrats who should know better, is equally disturbing. His MFA interlocutors treat rule of law as a criterion to be checked off rather than as an essential pre-condition.

11. (C) Comment: With the exception of the Dutch Ambassador, departing after six years here, EU Ambassadors remain publicly upbeat about Turkey's progress. Since Dec. 17, however, the most active EU DCMs and Counselors have become much more pessimistic about the willingness of Turkish authorities to understand and adapt to EU realities. End comment.

MCELDOWNEY